

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 4205

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: LEFTIST STUDENTS WIN AT UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA

REF: SAN JOSE A-136 (OCTOBER 24, 1974)

1. SUMMARY: A COALITION OF COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST STUDENT PARTIES WON THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 31 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA (UCR). THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE FAR LEFT HAS WON CONTROL OF THE UCR STUDENT GOVERNMENT, THE FEDERACION DE ESTUDIANTES DE LA UCR (FEUCR). TRABAJO'S LOSS IS A MAJOR BLOW TO THE PLN WHICH PROVIDED IT WITH SUPPORT. MOREOVER, THE POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF THE NEW STUDENT GOVERNMENT DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE UNIVERSITY AS A WHOLE.
END SUMMARY.

2. A COALITION COMPOSED OF THE COMMUNIST STUDENT PARTY, FRENTE ACCION UNIVERSITARIA (FAU), THE UNIVERSITY WING OF THE COSTA RICAN SOCIALIST PARTY CALLED THE MOVIMIENTO REVOLUCIONARIO AUTENTICO (MRA), AND THE FAENA, A REVISIONIST MARXIST UNIVERSITY PARTY AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL LEVEL FRENTE POPULAR COSTARRICENSE (FPC), PLUS A COUPLE OF MICRO-LEFTIST
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PARTIES, SOUNDLY BEAT THE INCUMBENT PLNA-SUPPORTED

STUDENTS OF THE UCR ON OCTOBER 31. IN DISTANT THIRD PLACE WAS THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN STUDENT PARTY LIGA DE ACCION UNIVERSITARIO (LAU). ABSTENTIONISM WAS HIGH, CALCULATED TO BE ABOUT 55 PERCENT, AND AN IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO TRABAJO'S LOSS (UPA: 5,143; TRABAJO: 3,099; LAU: 727).

3. ALBERTO SALOM ECHEVERRIA, A FIFTY-YEAR STUDENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, WON THE PRESIDENCY AND MARIO DELGADO CASCANTE WON THE VICE PRESIDENCY. SALOM IS A BRILLIANT STUDENT AND ORATOR, AND DESCRIBED TO BE AN EXCELLENT, NATURAL LEADER. HE HAS BEEN A LEADER IN VARIOUS SOCIALIST YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS AND ACTIVE IN SEVERAL PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. HE WAS OUSTED IN JUNE 1971 FOR VIOLENCE IN CONNECTION WITH A BANANA WORKERS MATTER. THE BREAKDOWN BETWEEN PARTIES WINNING THE REMAINDER OF THE FEUCER DIRECTORATE'S TOTAL OF 11 SEATS IS NOT YET KNOWN BUT UPA'S MORE THAN 2,000-VOTE MARGIN SEEMS TO ASSURE IT A COMMANDING MAJORITY IN THE UNIVERSITY'S 1974/1975 STUDENT GOVERNMENT. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE FAR LEFT HAS MANAGED TO WIN THE UCR STUDENT ELECTIONS AND IN DOING SO BROKE THE SUCCESSIVE THREE-YEAR INCUMBENCY OF TRABAJO. THE ELECTION OF THE TWO STUDENT DELEGATES TO THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL WAS HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE FEUCR ELECTIONS AND AGAIN THE UPA CANDIDATES CAME OUT STRONGLY ON TOP.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY HAD ESTIMATED IN REPAIR THAT TRABAJO HAD A BETTER-THAN-EVEN CHANCE TO STAY IN OFFICE, IT HAD BECOME APPARENT LAST WEEK THAT THE COMBINED IMPACT OF FAENA'S SUPPORT FOR UPA, ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT TO THE TRABAJO SLATE BY INCUMBENT FEUCR PRESIDENT (AND TRABAJO LEADER) RODOLFO NAVAS, ON THE OTHER, WOULD MAKE A TRABAJO VICTORY MOST DIFFICULT UNLESS STUDENTS TURNED OUT TO VOTE IN RECORD NUMBERS.

5. THE NEW STUDENT GOVERNMENT UNDER SALOM,
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TOGETHER WITH THE REPUTED TENDENCY OF THE NEW UCR RECTOR, CLAUDIO GUTIERREZ, TO COURT STUDENT VOTES WHEN FACED WITH UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ON PERSONNEL OR POLICY ISSUES, PORTENDS A SHARP SHIFT TO THE POLITICAL LEFT AT THE UCR. LATENT, ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENTS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY, NEVER FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE BUT RELATIVELY DORMANT UNDER THREE YEARS OF TRABAJO STUDENT LEADERSHIP, CAN NOW BE

EXPECTED TO BE PROVOKED AND AWAKENED. THIS WILL
UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON OVERALL
RELATIONS BETWEEN THIS MISSION AND THE UNIVERSITY
AND MAY SPECIFICALLY AFFECT SOME OF OUR ONGOING OR
PLANNED CULTURAL PROGRAMS AT THIS INSTITUTION.

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